



October 6, 2022

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Chair, State Building Code Council  
PO Box 41449  
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Subject: Adoption and Amendment of the 2021 Washington State Energy Code, Residential Provisions

On behalf of the 2200 members of League of Women Voters of Washington, I urge the Council to affirm the Residential Code proposals 21-GP2-065 and 1-GP2-066 requiring new residential construction to supply space heating and water heating with electric heat pump systems. I base this testimony on League of Women Voters positions that reflect careful study of issues covering health care, justice, energy, and climate change. These code proposals align with our positions.

Our membership understands that the increasing disruption of climate change is a threat to good governance and equity of our citizens and residents. Requiring heat pumps for new construction of single family dwellings, duplexes, and townhouses will both improve energy efficiency in homes and mitigate negative environmental impacts as required in RCW 19.27A.015. Methane is a significant and growing source of greenhouse gases from increased usage and from leakage (NOAA report 4-7-22; Science Magazine 6-21-18). Scientific studies have also shown that methane leakage and burning byproducts in homes degrade the health of our residents, most significantly children. Therefore, we also support the proposed requirements for additional ventilation when new homes must include methane for cooking.

Amending the building codes to require these heat pump implementations ensures home buyers and renters have the heat pump option for reducing their costs in the near term and long term. Heat pump space heating also provides the capability of cooling during high temperature events that we are experiencing in the Northwest. Gas or resistance heat sources is merely a short-term cost savings, and locks a homeowner into less capable systems with costlier energy in the future. Retrofitting a home is more expensive than building it right in the first place.

Revising building codes to improve the efficiency and expand clean energy will ensure we make the right investments in the health and financial outlook of WA residents. The investment we make in clean heat pump systems and in electrifying homes for everyone will pay back with reduced energy costs over time, improved health, and reduced health care costs. We must ensure that all Washington residents have the opportunity to enjoy these benefits. Our nation must take action at all levels of policy-making: federal, state, and local. Washington must continue doing its part as a leader in confronting climate change. We have no time to lose.

Thank you for accommodating citizens to participate in this regulatory process.

Martin Gibbins  
Climate Change & Energy Issues Chair  
League of Women Voters of Washington

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